



## 44 dead

In October and November 2010, three bulk carriers sank during the carriage of nickel ore from Indonesia to China. In total, 44 seamen died. It is likely that all three ships were lost as a result of a loss of stability caused by cargo liquefaction.



The London P&I Club's StopLoss has twice featured articles emphasising the great care that must be taken when loading nickel ore in Indonesia and the Philippines, where it is often offered for shipment with a dangerously high moisture content. However, in response to the three recent total losses, in January 2011 all P&I Clubs in the International Group issued a common Circular, entitled "Indonesia and the Philippines – Safe Carriage of Nickel Ore Cargoes". The Circular addresses specific concerns about the physical properties of nickel ore, the reliability of certificates offered by the shippers in respect of the Transportable Moisture Limit and the moisture content, and the threats that have been made against independent surveyors who attempt to assist Masters.

The precautions recommended in the Circular cover both practical steps that can be undertaken at the load port to ensure that dubious certificates are not relied upon and advice on avoiding charterparty clauses which seek to restrict Owners' right to apply fully the provisions of the International Maritime Solid Bulk Cargoes Code (IMSBC Code) or appoint independent surveyors of their choice. The Circular also reminds Members that failure to comply with the IMSBC Code could result in prejudice to P&I cover.

Industry reports indicate that the serious problems are likely to prevail as a result of the sustained demand for high volumes of nickel ore imports. One case handled by the Club showed that high moisture content problems occur in other regions apart from Indonesia and the Philippines, while another case highlighted how close co-operation between the Club and Members is vital.

In the first case, the Member contacted the Club very soon after receiving orders from a charterer to load nickel ore in New Caledonia. The Club arranged for an expert to travel to New Caledonia and, with the assistance of the Master, all of the cargo presented for shipment was rejected as unsafe. As there was no realistic prospect in the short term of the cargo drying, the voyage was cancelled.

In the second incident, while loading nickel ore in Indonesia, the Owners reported to the Club the Master's concerns about the outcome of "can tests" he had conducted. With the assistance of the local Correspondent, digital photographs of the can tests were sent to an expert in Singapore, who confirmed that the nickel ore loaded was very unlikely to be safe for carriage. With the co-operation of the time charterers, the cargo was discharged.

The nickel ore Circular follows a December 2010 Circular on the similar problems experienced in the carriage of iron ore fines from India. Both Circulars can be downloaded from **www.londonpandi.com** 







#### **SHIP INSPECTION PROGRAMME**

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#### The Loss Prevention Team



**Left-to-right** Ian Barr, Marianna Vitazkova, Mike Berry and Carl Durow

Since February 2010, Ian Barr has headed up the Loss Prevention Department – a team that is now enhanced by Master Mariners Carl Durow in London and David Nichol in Greece.

David Nichol

All three also have a heavy involvement with claims handling, providing an important interface between the two sides of the business. Mike Berry and Marianna Vitazkova are responsible for the day-to-day running of the Ship Inspection Programme. Over the last couple of years, the Loss Prevention Team's focus has been to disseminate advice through *StopLoss*, News Alerts and bespoke in-house loss prevention seminars.

They are always keen to hear from Members with their thoughts on industry issues. Alternatively, anyone who is interested in an in-house seminar on loss prevention issues can contact the team on **stoploss@londonpandi.com** 



In this regard, the Club has been pleased to assist a Member recently in addressing concerns about the level of English spoken by the officers on an internationally trading bulk carrier. Clearly, effective communication between, for example, the bridge team and a pilot is vitally important. Moreover, satisfactory levels of English comprehension are mandatory under both SOLAS and STCW.

Language difficulties have been the focus of two reports reviewed recently by the Club. In the first report, the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) considered an incident in which a ship's anchor damaged a submarine pipeline. The ATSB determined as a "Significant Safety Issue" the fact that: "The ship's working language, English, was not used by its

#### **Communicating in English**

The Club's Ship Inspection Programme provides useful feedback regarding the situation onboard entered ships and can assist Members in identifying areas for improvement.

crew for all communications on the bridge indicating that the procedure had not been effectively implemented onboard the ship. This limited the pilot's awareness, impeded teamwork, caused delays and increased risks, particularly those associated with releasing the anchor cable."

The second report concerns a judgment of the Federal Court of Australia in which the circumstances of a grounding and subsequent total loss of a laden bulker were examined. The area in which the ship ran aground was described in both the Pilot book and the chart as "Dangerous to navigation ... inadequately surveyed. Ships without local knowledge should not traverse the area...". Apparently the Master's limited grasp of English led him to conclude that he had such local knowledge because he had studied the chart and the Pilot book. The Judge commented: "I am prepared to accept that (the Master) because of his language difficulties, may not have understood the position. But that renders him incompetent in an objective sense."

The language problems highlighted by the recent inspection were probably not so readily apparent to the ship managers because the working language for their communications with the ship was not English. However, English language training and testing have now been added to the managers' existing onboard Computer Based Training (CBT) programme.

Any Member who would like a copy of the above reports or suggestions for an appropriate CBT module can, as always, contact stoploss@londonpandi.com



# Key preparations for fire-fighting

In line with industry trends focusing on risk management, one of the areas covered by the Club's Ship Inspection Programme is fire training. The response to two recent cargo fires has highlighted the value of both fire-fighting training and realistic shipboard drills for ships' crews.

When the crew of a containership spotted smoke escaping from a container stuffed with bone meal in bulk, they quickly established the best means of fighting a fire involving that commodity. They then executed a well-drilled plan to extinguish the fire by flooding the container using a fire-fighting lance connected to a fire hose. The lance was introduced into the box through a hole which the crew punctured in the roof of the container. The same technique was deployed when the bone meal inside a second container also started to self-heat.

In contrast, another crew's response to a fire in cotton bales loaded in a tween-decker was significantly less effective. While the Master's decision to deploy the CO<sub>2</sub> fixed fire-fighting system was fully compliant with the IMDG Code recommendations. the crew's failure to ensure that the cargo space was sealed before releasing the gas rendered the CO<sub>2</sub> wholly ineffective. The Master subsequently sent the fire team into the cargo spaces to fight the fire with hoses. Unfortunately, one of the fire team appears to have become disorientated in the thick smoke, suggesting that he had not received adequate training in fire-fighting techniques. He fell from the tween deck level to the tank top, sustaining severe iniuries.





Whereas the operators of the containership had a well developed training programme, which included realistic drills on a range of different fire types and locations, there was no such prudent practice in place on the other ship. Members are reminded of their obligations to conduct regular and realistic onboard emergency drills to the requirements of the flag state, SOLAS Convention and as provided for under the ISM Code Section 8 'Emergency Preparedness'.

A useful source of guidance is MGN 71: Musters, drills, on-board training and instructions, and Decision Support Systems at: http://www.mcga.gov.uk/c4mca/mgn71.pdf



#### MEASURES FOR SAFE MOORING

Accidents to crew during mooring operations are a continuing cause of concern to the Club. It is always encouraging to receive reports through the Ship Inspection Programme of Members conducting Task Risk Assessments on the subject of mooring operations.

A responsible officer should be in charge of each of the mooring parties, and a suitable means of communication between the responsible officers and the ship's bridge team should be established. Mooring operations should always be controlled so as to prevent mooring ropes and wires from coming under excessive strain. Even if ropes do not fail at the time, excessive strain contributes to accelerated wear and damage to the rope, increasing the risk of ropes parting even where the strain on them is within their working load. Synthetic fibre ropes may stretch up to 30% of their length when under strain which will be recovered almost instantaneously with the release of tension or if the rope parts. This is likely to result in a "snap-back" effect, particularly in the vicinity of leads, bitts and winch drums, and potentially serious injuries to any crew members who happen to be within the snap-back zone. Crew should also take care not to stand in the loop or bight of a rope when mooring.

To minimise risk, crew should be properly trained in the proper maintenance and use of mooring ropes and equipment, and in the hazards associated with these operations. It is strongly recommended that a bird's eye view of the mooring deck arrangement is produced (an aerial view from a high point of the ship can be utilised) to more readily identify danger areas.

Further information on 'Snap-Back' Zones can be found in section 6.3.5 of the Oil Companies International Marine Forum (OCIMF) publication "Mooring Equipment Guidelines".



### New rules for ship to ship operations

A number of ship to ship (STS) operations in the UK last year gave rise to incidents of unintended contact between the ships involved, prompting a MAIB investigation.

Industry best practice for the planning and execution of STS operations is contained in the ICS/OCIMF Ship to Ship Transfer Guide. STS operations take place either while both ships are underway at very low speed or at anchor. The operation is usually organised by an STS Service provider who may supply a superintendent/mooring master and equipment, as required. Fenders are deployed between the ships in an effort to prevent contact, with large Yokohama type fenders placed between the parallel bodies of the ships and smaller secondary fenders at the ends. The cargo transfer itself is carried out using flexible hoses fitted with quick release devices. The allocation of risk for STS operations between Owners and Charterers is often dealt with by the inclusion of an STS rider clause, but there is rarely, if ever, any contractual allocation of risk between the ships.

The regulatory regime governing STS operations at sea was strengthened when IMO's Marine Environment

Protection Committee at its 59th Session (MEPC 59) adopted amendments to MARPOL in the form of a new Chapter 8 to Annex I. This initiative has been taken with the aim of further regulating STS oil transfer operations to protect the marine environment from the risk of marine pollution, and to give coastal states a degree of control over these operations when they are carried out within their territorial waters or Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).

These international regulations for the "Prevention of Pollution during Transfer of Oil at Sea" came into force on 1 January 2011 and apply to any oil tanker with a gross tonnage of over 150mts engaged in STS operations at sea. Bunkering operations and oil transfer operations associated with fixed and floating platforms (including FPSOs and FSUs) are excluded.

Chapter 8 will require affected oil tankers to carry onboard an approved STS Operations Plan, describing how STS operations are to be conducted, which has to be approved by the Flag State Administration and written in the working language of the ship. STS Operations Plan approval must be obtained no later than the date of the first annual, intermediate or renewal survey of the ship carried out on or after 1 January 2011. The Plan must be developed in accordance with the requirements of IMO's manual on "Oil Pollution, Section 1, Prevention" and the ICS/ OCIMF "Ship to Ship Transfer Guide, Petroleum", 4th Edition 2005. The Plan may be incorporated into the existing Safety Management System.

Operations carried out on or after 1 April 2012 must be in accordance with the approved plan. Records of STS Operations shall be recorded in the Oil Record Book which should be retained onboard for a period of no less than 3 years after the transfer occurred. Furthermore, any oil tanker subject to the regulations that plans STS operations within the territorial sea or EEZ of a state party to MARPOL must give that state no less than 48 hours' advance notice of the scheduled STS operations.

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